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Patentanmeldung Nr. Patent application No. Demande de brevet n°

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Der Präsident des Europäischen Patentamts;
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For the President of the European Patent Office
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Novel enzyme

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Novel enzyme

The present invention concerns a novel enzyme, namely aldehyde dehydrogenase III (hereinafter referred to as SNDH III), which is responsible for both of the conversions, from L-sorbosone to L-ascorbic acid (hereinafter referred to as vitamin C) at neutral pH, 5 and from L-sorbosone to 2-keto-L-gulonic acid (hereinafter referred to as 2-KGA) at alkaline pH. The present invention also provides a process for producing said enzyme and a process for producing vitamin C and/or 2-KGA directly from aldoses such as L-sorbosone utilizing said enzyme.

Vitamin C is one of very important and indispensable nutrient factor for human beings.

10 The metabolic pathways to produce vitamin C have been widely studied in various organisms. However, there is no report about purified enzymes relating to the direct conversion of L-sorbosone to vitamin C. Therefore, the enzyme of the present invention is very useful for a novel vitamin C production process substitutive for the current process such as the Reichstein method (*Helvetica Chimica Acta* 17:311 (1934)).

15 The present invention provides a purified SNDH III having the following physico-chemical properties:

a) Molecular weight: $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and one beta subunit, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da) or

20 molecular weight: $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and two beta subunits, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da)

b) Substrate specificity: active on aldehyde compounds

c) Cofactor: pyrroloquinoline quinone (PQQ) and heme c

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- d) Optimum pH: 6.5 to 8.0 (for the production of vitamin C from L-sorbose) or optimum pH: about 9.0 (for the production of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid from L-sorbose)
- e) Inhibitors: Co^{2+} , Cu^{2+} , Fe^{3+} , Ni^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , monoiodoacetate and sodium azide.

Another object of the present invention provides a process for producing SNDH III

- 5 described above, comprising cultivating a microorganism belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*, which is capable of producing SNDH III having the above mentioned properties, in an aqueous nutrient medium under aerobic conditions, disrupting the cells of the microorganism, and isolating and purifying SNDH III from the cell-free extract of the disrupted cells of the microorganism.
- 10 Further object of the present invention provides a process for producing a carboxylic acid and/or its lactone from its corresponding aldose, comprising contacting the aldehyde with the purified SNDH III having the above mentioned properties, or cell-free extract prepared from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter* which is capable of producing SNDH III having the above mentioned properties in the presence of an electron acceptor.
- 15

In the following a brief description of the drawing is given.

Figure 1 shows an analysis of the purified SNDH III of the present invention by SDS-PAGE (10% polyacrylamide gel) stained with CBB. In lane 1 the molecular weight standards are depicted, lane 2 shows the purified SNDH III (alpha subunit: $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da, beta subunit: $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da) treated with 2% SDS.

Figure 2 shows the reduced minus oxidized difference spectrum of the purified SNDH III of the present invention.

The source of the SNDH III of the present invention is not critical. Thus, SNDH II of the present invention can be produced, for example, by isolation from a *Gluconobacter* or another organism capable of producing the aldehyde dehydrogenase having the above properties or it can be produced recombinantly or by chemical synthesis.

The physico-chemical properties of the purified sample of SNDH III prepared according to the Examples mentioned hereinafter are as follows:

1) Enzyme activity

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SNDH III of the present invention catalyzes the oxidation of L-sorbosone to vitamin C and/or 2-KGA in the presence of an electron acceptor according to the following reaction equation:



5 The SNDH III does not work with oxygen as an electron acceptor. This was affirmed by the failure of SNDH III to convert L-sorbosone to vitamin C and/or 2-KGA using oxygen as a possible electron acceptor. Furthermore, no oxygen consumption was detected in the reaction mixture as detected with a dissolved oxygen probe. In addition NAD and NADP are not suitable electron acceptors. However, other conventional electron acceptors can be
 10 utilized in conjunction with SNDH III of this invention. Preferred electron acceptors are 2,6-dichlorophenolindophenol (DCIP), phenazine methosulfate (PMS), ferricyanide and cytochrome *c*. There is no minimum amount of electron acceptors which must be present for at least some of the aldehyde substrate to be converted to its corresponding acid. However, the amount of substrate which can be oxidized depends on the amount of the parti-
 15 cular electron acceptor and its electron accepting characteristics.

The enzyme assay was performed as follows:

a) Assay determining the enzyme activity for the conversion from L-sorbosone to each product, vitamin C or 2-KGA

The reaction mixture consisted of 1.0 mM PMS, 25 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 20 7.0), 1.0 μ M PQQ, 1.0 mM CaCl_2 , 50 mM L-sorbosone and enzyme solution in a final volume of 100 μ l with water, said reaction mixture was prepared just before the assay. The reaction was carried out at 30 °C for 60 minutes unless otherwise stated. The amount of vitamin C, as the indication for enzyme activity, was measured at a wavelength of 264 nm by a high performance liquid chromatography system (HPLC) which was composed of a
 25 UV detector (TOSOH UV8000; TOSOH Co., Kyobashi 3-2-4, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan), a dualpump (TOSOH CCPE; TOSOH Co.), an integrator (Shimadzu C-R6A; Shimadzu Co., Kuwahara-cho 1, Nishinokyo, Chukyo-ku, Kyoto, Japan) and a column (YMC-Pack poly-
 amine II; YMC, Inc., 3233 Burnt Mill Drive Wilmington, NC 28403, USA). The amount of produced 2-KGA, as another indication for enzyme activity, was measured by HPLC as
 30 described above. One unit of the enzyme activity for each production was defined as the amount of the enzyme which produces 1 mg of vitamin C and 2-KGA, respectively, in the reaction mixture.

b) The photometrical assay of SNDH III

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The reaction mixture consisted of 0.1 mM DCIP, 1.0 mM PMS, 50 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0), 1.0 μ M PQQ, 2-100 mM substrate (L-sorbosone, D-glucosone, D-glucose, etc.) and enzyme solution in a final volume of 100 μ l with water, said reaction mixture was prepared just before the assay. The reaction was started at 25 °C with L-sorbosone, and the enzyme activity was measured as the initial reduction rate of DCIP at 600 nm. One unit of the enzyme activity was defined as the amount of the enzyme catalyzing the reduction of 1 μ mol DCIP per minute. The extinction coefficient of DCIP at pH 7.0 was taken as 14.2 mM⁻¹. A reference cuvette contained all the above constituents except for L-sorbosone.

10 The protein concentration was measured with Protein Assay CBB Solution (Nacalai tesque, Inc. Kyoto, Japan).

2) Substrate specificity

15 The substrate specificity of the enzyme was determined using the same enzyme assay method as described under 1b) above with the exception of using 100 mM potassium phosphate (pH 7.5) or 100 mM Tris-HCl (pH 9.0) as buffer. The relative activity of SNDH III for D-glucosone (2 mM), D-glucose (100 mM), and D-xylose (100 mM) was higher than that for L-sorbosone (2 mM) at both pH 7.5 and 9.0. However, the relative activity for L-sorbose (100 mM), D-sorbitol (100 mM), and L-gulono- γ -lactone (100 mM) was lower than 1 % of that for L-sorbosone at both pH 7.5 and 9.0. These results are presented

20 in Table 1A.

Table 1A: Substrate specificity of the purified SNDH III

Substrate	Relative activity (%)	
	pH 7.5	pH 9.0
L-Sorbosone	100	100
D-Glucosone	1262	391
D-Glucose	4236	522
L-Sorbose	<1	<1
D-Sorbitol	<1	<1
D-Xylose	5545	633
L-Gulono- γ -lactone	<1	<1

Table 1B: Deduced products of the oxidation of the substrate indicated in Table 1A

- 5 -

Substrate	Product
L-Sorbose	Vitamin C / 2-KGA
D-Glucosone	D-iso-Ascorbic acid / 2-Keto-D-gluconate
D-Glucose	D-Gluconate
D-Xylose	D-Xylic acid

3) Optimum pH

The correlation between the reaction rate of SNDH III and pH values of the reaction mixture was determined by the same assay method as described under 1a) above, with the exception that various pHs and buffers in a concentration of 100 mM were used.

SNDH III of the present invention showed relatively high activity for the production of vitamin C at from pH 6.5 to 8.0 and high activity for the production of 2-KGA at a pH of about 9.0.

4) Effect of temperature

10 The effect of temperature for the enzyme reaction was tested by the same assay method as described under 1a) above, with the exception that various temperatures were used. In both productions of vitamin C and 2-KGA, the enzyme reaction was carried out stable up to at least 40 °C.

5) Effects of metal ions and inhibitors

15 The effects of metal ions and inhibitors on the L-sorbose dehydrogenase activity of the enzyme were examined by measuring the activity using the same assay method as described under 1b) above. Each compound solution was stirred into the basal reaction mixture and the reaction was started with the addition of SNDH III of the present invention. The results are shown in Table 2.

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Table 2: Effect of inhibitors and metals on the activity of the purified SNDH III

Compound	Relative activity (%)
None	100.0
EDTA	83.9
NaN ₃	74.3
Monoiodoacetate	11.9
CaCl ₂ ·2H ₂ O	101.5
CoCl ₂ ·6H ₂ O	67.9
CuSO ₄	<1
Fe ₂ (SO ₄) ₃ ·xH ₂ O	61.0
NiSO ₄ ·6H ₂ O	68.5
TiCl ₄	87.9
ZnCl ₂	63.3
MgCl ₂	74.1

Each compound was added to the reaction mixture at a concentration of 1.0 mM, with the exception that the concentrations of EDTA, NaN₃ and monoiodoacetate were 5.0 mM.

5 As shown in Table 3, Co²⁺, Cu²⁺, Fe³⁺, Ni²⁺, Zn²⁺, and Mg²⁺ inhibited the enzyme activity. The addition of 5 mM monoiodoacetate strongly inhibited the enzyme activity. The addition of 5 mM sodium azide weakly inhibited the enzyme activity.

6) Molecular weight

The molecular weight of the SNDH III was measured with a size exclusion gel column
 10 (TSK-gel G3000 SWXL; TOSOH Co., Akasaka 1-7-7, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan). The enzyme showed two peaks corresponding to the apparent molecular weight of about 190,000 ± 15,000 Da and about 250,000 ± 20,000 Da on the chromatography. On analyzing SNDH III by SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, it was shown that SNDH III
 15 consisted of two kind of the heterologous subunits of molecular weight 75,000 ± 3,000 and 55,000 ± 2,000 Da as shown in Fig. 1. This indicates that SNDH III comprises two kinds of subunit structures of the two alpha and one beta subunits, or the two alpha and two beta subunits, in which the alpha subunit has 75,000 ± 3,000 Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of 55,000 ± 2,000 Da.

Both the trimeric and tetrameric forms of SNDH III are active.

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7) Prosthetic group

The purified SNDH III (0.1 mg) in 50 μ l of 100 mM NaH₂PO₄-HCl (pH about 1.0) was added by an equal volume of methanol and mixed well. The sample was centrifuged to remove a precipitate. The resulting supernatant was used for analysis of the prosthetic group. The absorption spectrum of the extract was almost identical with an authentic sample of PQQ (Mitsubishi Gas Chemical, Japan). Its absorbance peaks were found at 251 and 348 nm. Furthermore, by HPLC analysis using a reverse phase column (YMC-Pack Pro C18 AS-312; YMC Co., Ltd) at a wavelength of 313 nm, the extract of SNDH III with methanol showed the same retention time as that of the authentic PQQ.

5 The detection of heme c of the purified SNDH III was attempted by the reduced-minus-oxidized difference spectrum taken by a UV-VIS recording spectrophotometer (Shimadzu UV-2200; Shimadzu Co.). SNDH III was suspended in 50 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0) at a concentration of 50 μ g/ml and SNDH III of dithionite-reduced form and ammonium persulfate-oxidized form were prepared to measure the difference spectrum. The spectrum gave the difference maxima at 552 and 523 nm, as shown in Fig. 2. 15 These results strongly suggest that SNDH III has PQQ and heme c as prosthetic groups.

10

8) Effect of substrate concentration

The velocity of the oxidizing reaction with various concentrations of L-sorbosone from 1 mM to 8 mM was measured to determine the *Km* value for L-sorbosone. The Michaelis 20 constants were calculated to be 6.5 mM and 16.8 mM at pHs of 7.5 and 9.0, respectively, from the Lineweaver-Burk plot based on the reaction velocity when DCIP was used as the electron acceptor for the reaction.

9) Purification procedure

The purification of SNDH III is effected by any combination of known purification 25 methods, such as ion exchange column chromatography, hydrophobic column chromatography, salting out and dialysis.

SNDH III provided by the present invention can be prepared by cultivating an appropriate microorganism in an aqueous nutrient medium under aerobic conditions, disrupting the 30 cells of the microorganism and isolating and purifying the aldehyde dehydrogenase from the cell-free extract of the disrupted cells of the microorganism.

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The microorganisms used for the process of the present invention are microorganisms belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter* which are capable of producing aldehyde dehydrogenase as defined herein before. Subcultures and mutants of *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812) can also be used in the present invention.

5 A preferred strain is *Gluconobacter oxydans*. The strain most preferably used in the present invention is *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM 4025, which was deposited at the Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen in Göttingen (Germany), based on the stipulations of the Budapest Treaty, under DSM No. 4025 on March 17, 1987. The depositor was The Oriental Scientific Instruments Import and Export Corporation for Institute of Microbiology, Academia Sinica, 52 San-Li-He Rd., Beijing, Peoples Republic of China. The effective depositor was said Institute, of which the full address is The Institute of Microbiology, Academy of Sciences of China, Haidian, Zhongguancun, Beijing 100080, People's Republic of China.

Moreover, a subculture of the strain has also been deposited at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), Japan, also based on the stipulations of the Budapest Treaty, under the deposit No. *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812) on March 30, 1992. The depositor is Nippon Roche K.K., 6-1, Shiba 2-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan. This subculture is also most preferably used in the present invention.

20 Furthermore, European Patent Publication No. 0 278 447 discloses the characteristics of this strain, as follows:

- a) production of 2-KGA from sorbose,
- b) ethanol is oxidized to acetic acid,
- c) D-glucose is oxidized to D-gluconic acid and 2-keto-D-gluconic acid,
- 25 d) ketogenesis of polyalcohols,
- e) pellicle and ring growth in mannitol broth (24 hours cultivation) at pH 4 and 5, and pellicle growth in glucose broth at pH 4.5,
- f) glycerol is not substantially oxidized to dihydroxyacetone,
- 30 g) production of 2-keto-D-glucaric acid from sorbitol and glucaric acid but not from glucose, fructose, gluconic acid, mannitol or 2-keto-D-gluconic acid,
- h) polymorphic, apparently no flagella,
- i) brown pigment is produced from fructose,
- j) good growth when co-cultured in the presence of *Bacillus megaterium* or a cell extract thereof,
- 35 k) streptomycin sensitive.

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The microorganism may be cultured in an aqueous medium supplemented with appropriate nutrients under aerobic conditions. The cultivation may be conducted at a pH of 4.0 to 9.0, preferably 6.0 to 8.0. The cultivation period varies depending on the pH, temperature and nutrient medium to be used, and is preferably about 1 to 5 days. The 5 preferred temperature range for carrying out the cultivation is from about 13 °C to about 36 °C, preferably from 18 °C to 33 °C.

It is usually required that the culture medium contains such nutrients as assimilable carbon sources, for example glycerol, D-mannitol, D-sorbitol, erythritol, ribitol, xylitol, arabitol, inositol, dulcitol, D-ribose, D-fructose, D-glucose, and sucrose, preferably 10 D-sorbitol, D-mannitol and glycerol; and digestible nitrogen sources such as organic substances, for example, peptone, yeast extract, baker's yeast, urea, amino acids, and corn steep liquor. Various inorganic substances may also be used as nitrogen sources, for example nitrates and ammonium salts. Furthermore, the culture medium usually contains inorganic salts, for example magnesium sulfate, potassium phosphate and calcium carbon- 15 ate.

An embodiment for the isolation and purification of SNDH III from the microorganism after the cultivation is briefly described hereinafter:

- (1) Cells are harvested from the liquid culture broth by centrifugation or filtration.
- (2) The harvested cells are washed with water, physiological saline or a buffer solution 20 having an appropriate pH.
- (3) The washed cells are suspended in the buffer solution and disrupted by means of a homogenizer, sonicator or French press or by treatment with lysozyme and the like to give a solution of disrupted cells.
- (4) SNDH III is isolated and purified from the cell-free extract of disrupted cells, 25 preferably from the soluble fraction of the microorganism.

A cell free extract can be obtained from the disrupted cells by any conventional technique, including but not limited to centrifugation.

SNDH III provided by the present invention is useful as a catalyst for the production of vitamin C and/or 2-KGA from L-sorbose. The reaction can be conducted at pH values 30 of about 5.5 to 9.0 for both of vitamin C production and 2-KGA production in the presence of an electron acceptor, for example DCIP, PMS and the like in a solvent such as phosphate buffer, Tris-buffer and the like. For vitamin C production, the best results are usually achieved if the pH is set at about 6.5 to 8.0 and the temperature is set at about 20 to

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40 °C. For 2-KGA production, the best results are usually achieved if the pH is set at about 9.0 and the temperature is set at about 20 to 50 °C.

The concentration of L-sorbosone in a reaction mixture can vary depending upon other reaction conditions but, in general, is about 0.5 to 50 g/l, most preferably from about 1 to 5 about 30 g/L

In the reaction, SNDH III may also be used in an immobilized state with an appropriate carrier. Any means of immobilizing enzymes generally known in the art may be used. For instance, the enzyme may be bound directly to a membrane, granules or the like of a resin having one or more functional groups, or it may be bound to the resin through bridging 10 compounds having one or more functional groups, for example glutaraldehyde.

In addition to the above, the cultured cells are also useful for the production of carboxylic acids and/or its lactones from their corresponding aldoses, especially for the production of 2-KGA and/or vitamin C from L-sorbosone. The production of other carboxylic acids and/or its lactones from their corresponding aldoses is carried out under the same conditions, including substrate concentration, as the conversion of L-sorbosone to 2-KGA 15 and/or vitamin C as described above.

The following Examples further illustrate the present invention.

Example 1: Preparation of SNDH III

All the operations were performed at 8 °C, and the buffer was 0.05 M potassium phosphate 20 (pH 7.0) unless otherwise stated.

(1) Cultivation of *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812)

Gluconobacter oxydans DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812) was grown on an agar plate containing 5.0 % D-mannitol, 0.25 % MgSO₄·7H₂O, 1.75 % corn steep liquor, 5.0 % baker's yeast, 0.5 % urea, 0.5 % CaCO₃ and 2.0 % agar at 27 °C for 4 days. One loopful of the cells 25 was inoculated into 50 ml of a seed culture medium containing 2 % L-sorbose, 0.2 % yeast extract, 0.05 % glycerol, 0.25 % MgSO₄·7H₂O, 1.75 % corn steep liquor, 0.5 % urea and 1.5 % CaCO₃ in a 500 ml Erlenmeyer flask, and cultivated at 30 °C with 180 rpm for one day on a rotary shaker. The seed culture thus prepared was used for inoculating 15 liters of medium, which contained 8.0 % L-sorbose, 0.05 % glycerol, 0.25 % MgSO₄·7H₂O, 3.0 % 30 corn steep liquor, 0.4 % yeast extract and 0.15 % antifoam, in a 30-l jar fermentor. The fermentation parameters were 800 rpm for the agitation speed and 0.5 vvm (volume of air / volume of medium / minute) for aeration at a temperature of 30 °C. The pH was main-

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tained at 7.0 with sodium hydroxide during the fermentation. After 48 hours of cultivation, 30 liters of the cultivated broth containing the cells of *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812) by using the two sets of fermentors were harvested by continuous centrifugation. The pellets containing the cells were recovered and suspended in an appropriate volume of saline. After the suspension was centrifuged at 2,500 rpm (1,000 x g), the supernatant containing the slightly reddish cells was recovered to remove the insoluble materials derived from corn steep liquor and yeast extract which were ingredients for the medium. The supernatant was then centrifuged at 8,000 rpm (10,000 x g) to obtain the cell pellet. As a result, 123 g of the wet weight of cells of *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812) was obtained from 30 liters of the broth.

(2) Preparation of cytosol fraction

A portion (64.2 g) of the cell paste was suspended with 280 ml of the buffer and passed through a French pressure cell press. After centrifugation to remove intact cells, the supernatant was designated as the cell-free extract, and the cell-free extract was centrifuged at 100,000 x g for 60 minutes. The resultant supernatant (227 ml) was designated as the soluble fraction of *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812). After this fraction was dialyzed against the buffer, 105 ml of the dialyzed fraction having the specific activity for producing vitamin C from L-sorbose of 0.107 unit/mg protein were used for the next purification step.

(3) Diethylaminoethyl (DEAE)-cellulose column chromatography

The dialysate (150 ml) was put on a column of DEAE-cellulose (Whatman DE-52, 3 x 50 cm; Whatman BioSystems Ltd., Springfield Mill, James Whatman Way, Maidstone, Kent, U.K.) equilibrated with the buffer and washed with the buffer to elute minor proteins. Then proteins bound to the resin were eluted stepwise with 0.28, 0.32, 0.36 M NaCl in the buffer. Major enzyme activity was eluted at 0.36 M NaCl. The active fractions (143 ml) were collected.

(4) Carboxymethyl-cellulose column chromatography

A portion (127 ml) of the active fraction from the previous step was filtrated by an ultra-filtrator (Centriprep-10, Amicon; Amicon Inc. Cherry Hill Drive, Beverly, MA 01915, U.S.A.) to concentrate. After the concentrated sample (28 ml) was dialyzed against the buffer, 28 ml of the dialyzed fraction (31 ml) was put on a column of Carboxymethyl-cellulose (Whatman CM-52, 3 x 23 cm; Whatman BioSystems Ltd.) equilibrated with the buffer. The proteins that passed through the column without binding to the resin were collected.

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(5) Q-sepharose column chromatography (1st step)

The pooled active fractions (43 ml) were filtrated by an ultrafiltrator (Centriprep-10) to concentrate. A portion (9.5 ml) of the concentrated active fraction (10 ml) from the previous step was put on a column of Q-sepharose (Pharmacia, 1.5 by 50 cm) equilibrated with the buffer. After the column was washed with the buffer containing 0.3 M NaCl, a linear gradient of NaCl from 0.3 to 0.6 M was added to the buffer. The active fractions were eluted at NaCl concentrations ranging from 0.55 to 0.57 M.

(6) Q-sepharose column chromatography (2nd step)

The pooled active fractions (22 ml) from the previous step were filtrated by an ultrafiltrator (Centriprep-10) to concentrate. And the concentrated sample (3.0 ml) was dialyzed against the buffer. The dialyzed sample (3.5 ml) was put on a column of Q-sepharose (Pharmacia, 1.5 by 50 cm) equilibrated with the buffer. After the column was washed with the buffer containing 0.35 M NaCl, a linear gradient of NaCl from 0.35 to 0.7 M was added to the buffer. The active fractions were eluted at NaCl concentrations ranging from 0.51 to 0.53 M.

(7) Gel filtration column chromatography

The pooled active fractions (20 ml) from the previous step were filtrated by an ultrafiltrator (Centriprep-10) to concentrate and desalt. A portion (1.5 ml) of the concentrated and desalted (below 0.1 M NaCl) sample (2.0 ml) was put on a column of Sephadryl S-300 20 High Resolution (Pharmacia, 1.5 by 120 cm) equilibrated with the buffer containing 0.1M NaCl. The active fractions (12 ml) were collected and dialyzed against the buffer.

(8) Hydrophobic column chromatography

The dialyzed active fraction from the previous step was filtrated by an ultrafiltrator (Centriprep-10) to concentrate. A portion (1.5 ml) of the concentrated sample (1.75 ml) 25 was added to the equal volume (1.5 ml) of the buffer containing 3 M ammonium sulfate (the final concentration: 1.5 M). After centrifugation (15,000 x g) of the sample, the supernatant was loaded on a column RESOURCE ISO (Pharmacia, 1.0 ml) equilibrated with the buffer containing 1.5 M ammonium sulfate. After the column was washed with the buffer containing 1.5 M ammonium sulfate, the proteins were eluted with the buffer 30 containing a linear gradient of ammonium sulfate from 1.5 to 0.75 M. The active fractions corresponding to the ADH were eluted at ammonium sulfate concentrations ranging from 1.15 to 1.13 M. The active fractions were dialyzed against the buffer using dialysis cups (Dialysis-cup MWCO 8000, Daiichi pure chemicals, Nihonbashi 3-13-5, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan). Afterward, the fractions were gathered and stored at -20 °C.

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A summary of the purification steps of the enzyme was given in Table 3.

Table 3: Purification of SNDH III from *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812)

Step	Total activity (units)	Total protein (mg)	Specific activity (units*/mg protein)
Soluble fraction	343.0	3205.2	0.107
DEAE-Cellulose DE52	26.10	120.67	0.216
CM-Cellulose CM52	28.86	105.70	0.273
Q-Sepharose (1 st step)	38.94	12.56	3.100
Q-Sepharose (2 nd step)	10.77	3.47	3.102
Sephacryl S-300HR	9.09	0.71	12.81
RESOURCE-ISO	4.07	0.12	34.53

5 One unit* of the enzyme was defined as the amount of enzyme which produces 1 mg of
vitamin C per hour in the reaction mixture described in 1)-a) mentioned above.

(9) Purity of the isolated enzyme

The purified enzyme (0.12 mg/ml) with a specific activity of 34.5 units per mg protein for
vitamin C production and a specific activity of 7.82 units per mg protein for 2-KGA pro-

10 duction was used for the following analysis:

The molecular weight of the native SNDH III was estimated by high performance liquid
chromatography using a size exclusion gel column (TSK gel G3000 SWXL column, 7.8 x
300 mm) equilibrated with 0.1 M potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0) containing 0.3 M
NaCl at 280 nm and a flow rate of 1.5 ml per minute. Cyanocobalamin (1.35 kDa), myo-
15 globin (17 kDa), ovalbumin (44 kDa), γ -globulin (158 kDa) and thyroglobulin (670 kDa)
were used as molecular weight standards. The purified SNDH III showed two peaks
having the molecular weight of $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da and $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da.

According to sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE),
SNDH III consisted of two kinds of subunits, which are one with a molecular weight of
20 $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and another with a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da.

(10) Identification of the reaction product

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The reaction mixture containing the purified SNDH III (1.21 µg), L-sorbose (50 mM), PMS (1 mM), CaCl₂ (1 mM) and PQQ (1 µM) in 100 µl of the buffer was incubated for 1 hour at 30 °C. The reaction products were analyzed on thin layer chromatography (Silica gel 60F²⁵⁴, MERCK, 64271 Darmstadt, Germany) and HPLC. Two kinds of products, 5 vitamin C and 2-KGA, were obtained from the enzyme reaction. For vitamin C, the sample was assayed by an amino-column (YMC-Pack Polyamine-II, YMC, Inc.) on a HPLC system. For 2-KGA, the sample was assayed by a C-18 column (YMC-Pack Pro C18, YMC, Inc.) on a HPLC system.

Example 2: Effect of pH on the production of vitamin C or 2-KGA from L-sorbose by 10 SNDH III

The effect of pH for the enzyme reaction was tested. The reaction mixture containing the purified SNDH III (607 ng), L-sorbose (50 mM), PMS (1 mM), CaCl₂ (1 mM) and PQQ (1 µM) in 100 µl of the buffer (100 mM) was incubated for 1 hour at 30°C. The reaction products were analyzed by HPLC. The result was shown in Table 4.

15 Table 4: Effect of pH on the production of vitamin C or 2-KGA from L-sorbose by SNDH III

Buffer	pH	Vitamin C produced (mg/l)	2-KGA produced (mg/l)
Citrate-NaOH	4.47	3.2	0.0
Citrate-NaOH	5.43	6.2	13.9
Citrate-NaOH	6.42	83.2	15.1
Potassium phosphate	6.64	32.2	6.5
Potassium phosphate	7.05	77.8	11.1
Potassium phosphate	7.44	240.9	19.2
Potassium phosphate	7.84	137.9	8.2
Potassium phosphate	8.20	86.6	14.9
Tris-HCl	7.91	103.8	126.9
Tris-HCl	8.41	29.4	126.0
Tris-HCl	8.91	0.0	187.7

Example 3: Effect of temperature on the production of vitamin C or 2-KGA from L-sorbose by SNDH III

- 15 -

The effect of temperature on the enzyme activity was tested. The reaction mixture containing the purified SNDH III (607 ng), L-sorbosone (50 mM), PMS (1 mM), CaCl_2 (1 mM) and PQQ (1 μM) in 100 μl of 25 mM potassium phosphate buffer (pH 7.0) was incubated for 1 hour at various temperatures (20-60 $^{\circ}\text{C}$). The reaction products were analyzed by HPLC. The result was shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect of temperature on the production of vitamin C or 2-KGA from L-sorbosone by SNDH III

Temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$)	Vitamin C produced (mg/l)	2-KGA produced (mg/l)
20	229.6	50.9
25	267.9	53.8
30	232.2	49.9
35	295.4	53.4
40	264.6	45.9
50	202.0	54.4
60	24.4	33.2

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Claims

1. A purified aldehyde dehydrogenase having the following physico-chemical properties:
 - a) Molecular weight: $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and one beta subunit, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da) or molecular weight: $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and two beta subunits, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da),
 - b) Substrate specificity: active on aldehyde compounds,
 - c) Cofactor: pyrroloquinoline quinone and heme c,
 - d) Optimum pH: 6.5 to 8.0 (for the production of vitamin C from L-sorbose) or optimum pH: about 9.0 (for the production of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid from L-sorbose),
 - e) Inhibitors: Co^{2+} , Cu^{2+} , Fe^{3+} , Ni^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , monoiodoacetate and sodium azide.
2. The aldehyde dehydrogenase according to claim 1, which has a molecular weight of $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da.
3. The aldehyde dehydrogenase according to claim 1, which has a molecular weight of $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da.
4. The aldehyde dehydrogenase according to claim 1, which is derived from a micro-organism belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter* which is capable of producing said aldehyde dehydrogenase.
5. The aldehyde dehydrogenase according to claim 4, wherein the microorganism is *Gluconobacter oxydans* having the identifying characteristics of the strain *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812), a subculture or mutant thereof.
6. The aldehyde dehydrogenase according to claim 5, wherein the microorganism is *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812), a subculture or mutant thereof.
7. A process for producing an aldehyde dehydrogenase having the following physico-chemical properties:
 - a) Molecular weight: $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and one beta subunit, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da) or

molecular weight: $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and two beta subunits, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da),

b) Substrate specificity: active on aldehyde compounds,

5 c) Cofactor: pyrroloquinoline quinone and heme c,

d) Optimum pH: 6.5 to 8.0 (for the production of vitamin C from L-sorbose) or optimum pH: about 9.0 (for the production of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid from L-sorbose),

e) Inhibitors: Co^{2+} , Cu^{2+} , Fe^{3+} , Ni^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , monooiodoacetate and sodium azide, which comprises cultivating a microorganism belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*, which

10 is capable of producing the aldehyde dehydrogenase having the above properties, in an aqueous nutrient medium under aerobic conditions, disrupting the cells of the microorganism, and isolating and purifying the aldehyde dehydrogenase from the cell-free extract of the disrupted cells of the microorganism.

8. The process according to claim 7, wherein the microorganism is *Gluconobacter oxydans* microorganism having the identifying characteristics of the strain *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812), a subculture or mutant thereof.

9. The process according to claim 8, wherein the microorganism is *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812), a subculture or mutant thereof.

10. The process according to any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the reaction is carried out 20 at pH values of about 4.5 to 9.0 and at a temperature range from about 20 to 50 °C for both vitamin C production and 2-keto-L-gulonic acid production.

11. The process according to any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the reaction is carried out at pH values of about 6.5 to 8.0 for vitamin C production and of a pH of about 9.0 for 2-keto-L-gulonic acid production, and at a temperature range from 20 to 50 °C for both of 25 the productions.

12. A process for producing a carboxylic acid and/or its lactone from its corresponding aldose which comprises contacting the aldehyde with the purified aldehyde dehydrogenase having the following physico-chemical properties:

a) Molecular weight: $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two

30 alpha subunits and one beta subunit, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da) or

molecular weight: $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da (comprising a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and two beta subunits, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da),

- b) Substrate specificity: active on aldehyde compounds,
- 5 c) Cofactor: pyrroloquinoline quinone and heme c,
- d) Optimum pH: 6.5 to 8.0 (for the production of vitamin C from L-sorbosone) or optimum pH: about 9.0 (for the production of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid from L-sorbosone),
- e) Inhibitors: Co^{2+} , Cu^{2+} , Fe^{3+} , Ni^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , monoiodoacetate and sodium azide, or cell-free extract prepared from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*
- 10 which is capable of producing the aldehyde dehydrogenase having the above properties in the presence of an electron acceptor.

13. The process according to claim 12, wherein the microorganism is *Gluconobacter oxydans* microorganism having the identifying characteristics of the strain *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812), a subculture or mutant thereof.

15 14. The process according to claim 13, wherein the microorganism is *Gluconobacter oxydans* DSM No. 4025 (FERM BP-3812), a subculture or mutant thereof.

15. The process of claim 12, wherein the lactone is vitamin C, the carboxylic acid is 2-keto-L-gulonic acid and the aldose is L-sorbosone.

16. The process of claim 12, wherein the aldehyde dehydrogenase has a molecular weight 20 of $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da.

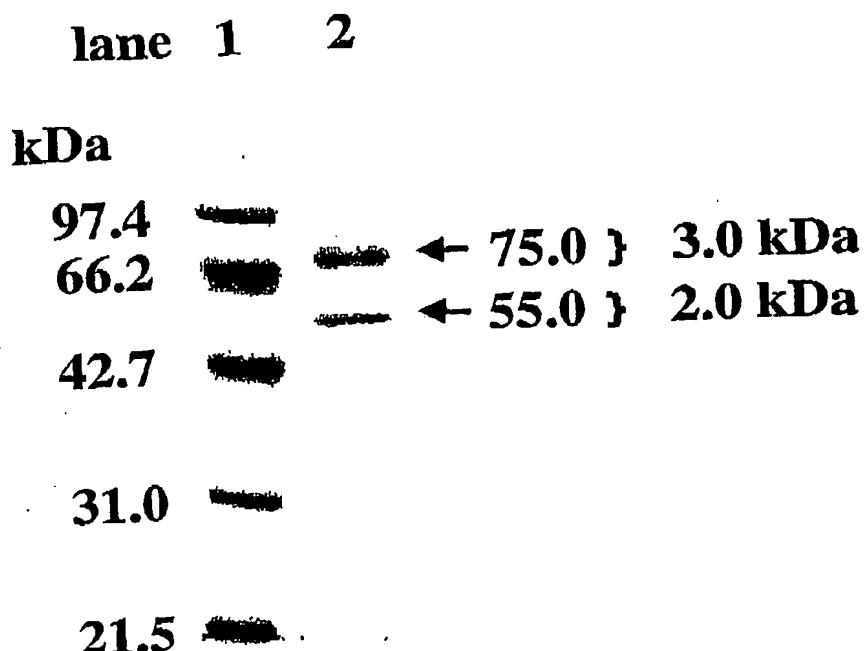
17. The process of claim 12, wherein the dehydrogenase has a molecular weight of $250,000 \pm 20,000$ Da.

18. The process according to any one of claims 12 to 17, wherein the reaction is carried out at pH values of about 4.5 to 9.0 and at a temperature range from 20 to 50 °C for both 25 vitamin C production and 2-keto-L-gulonic acid production.

19. The process according to any one of claims 12 to 17, wherein the reaction is carried out at pH values of about 6.5 to 8.0 for vitamin C production and of about 9.0 for 2-keto-L-gulonic acid production, and at a temperature range from 20 to 50 °C for both production ways.

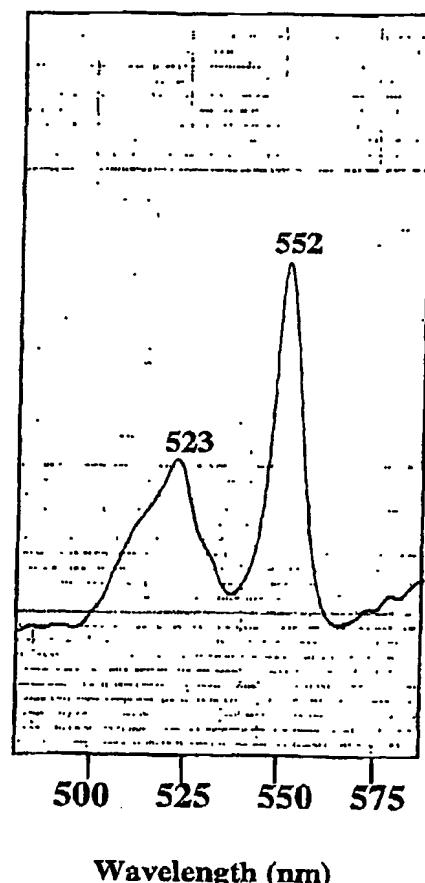
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Figure 1: SDS-PAGE analysis of the purified SNDH III.



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Figure 2: The reduced minus oxidized difference spectrum of the purified SNDH III.



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Abstract

The present invention concerns a novel aldehyde dehydrogenase having the following physico-chemical properties: a molecular weight of $190,000 \pm 15,000$ Da which comprises a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and one beta subunit, or a molecular weight of 5 250,000 \pm 20,000 Da which comprises a subunit structure of two alpha subunits and two beta subunits, in which the alpha subunit has a molecular weight of $75,000 \pm 3,000$ Da and the beta subunit has a molecular weight of $55,000 \pm 2,000$ Da; dehydrogenase activity on L-sorbosone, D-glucosone, D-glucose and D-xylose; utilizes as cofactor pyrroloquinoline quinone and heme c; has an optimum pH of from 6.5 to 8.0 for the production of vitamin 10 C and an optimum pH of about 9.0 for the production of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid from L-sorbosone; and is inhibited by Co^{2+} , Cu^{2+} , Fe^{3+} , Ni^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Mg^{2+} , monoiodoacetate, and sodium azide is derived from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Gluconobacter*.

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